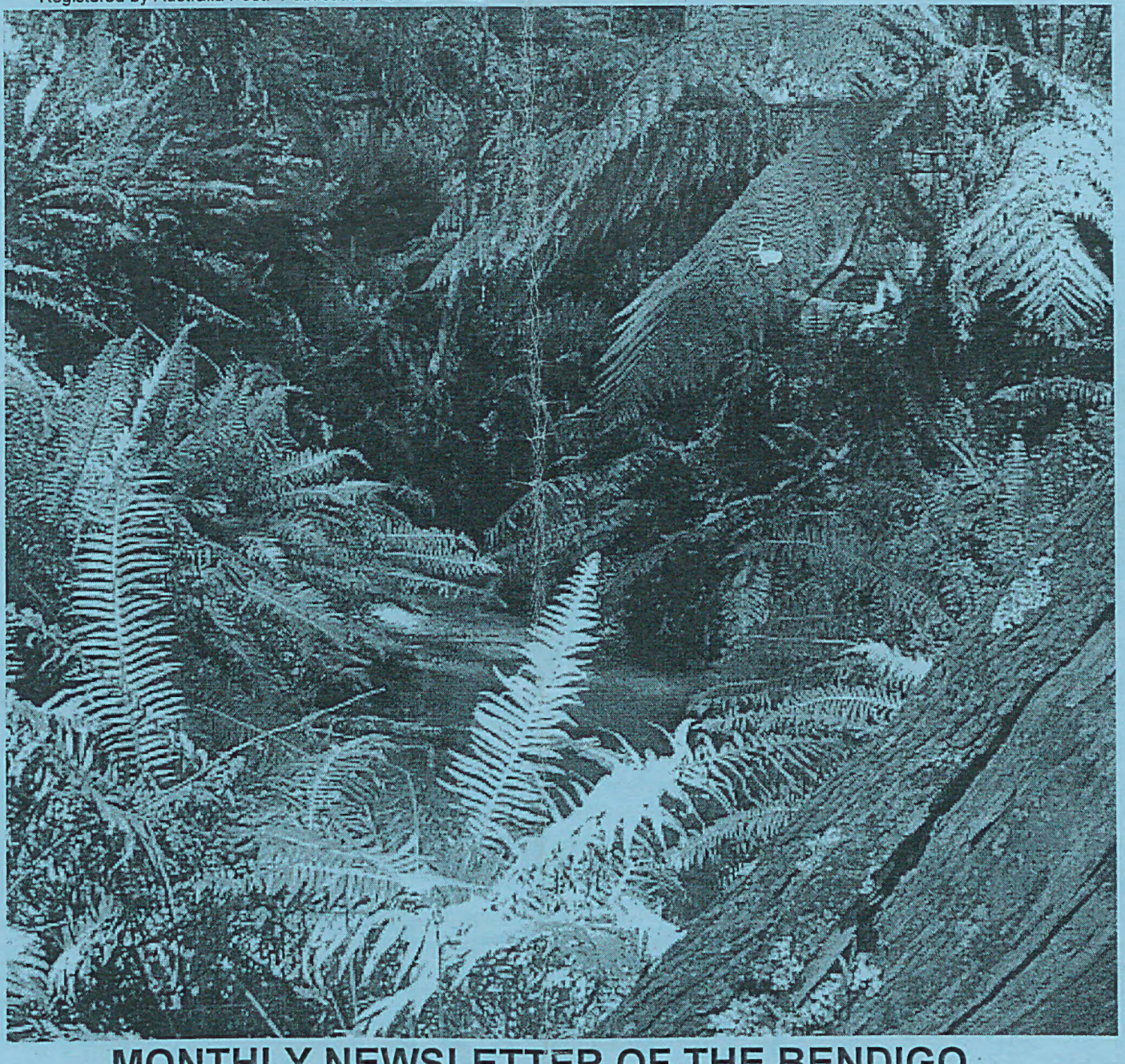
WHIRRAKEE

December 2005 Vol. 26 No. 11

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH4462



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

Office Bearers for 2005 - 2006

President	Matthew Comer	46 Railway Place, Goornong	5432 2380
Senior Vice President	Stuart Fraser	12 Bambara Close, Bendigo	
Junior Vice President	Anne Bridley		5449 3479.
Secretary	Bill Holsworth	13 Nabilla Crs, Bendigo	5443 4063
		e-mail:wholsworth@bigpond.com	
Minute Secretary	Jan Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
	(with Peter Ellis as assistant)		
Treasurer	Stuart Fraser		
Membership Officer	Kate Lottkowitz	80 Piccaninny Rd, RSD Strathfieldsaye	5439 3157
Excursion organiser	Richard Goonan		0423 418815
Syllabus organiser	Rod Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
	(an assistant's position for the syllabus organiser is still vacant)		
Librarian	Diana Collier	31 Milroy Street, Bendigo	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer	46 Railway Place, Goornong	5432 2380
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Darren White		0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens	82 Somerville Street, Bendigo	5443 2797
		e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The invited speaker at general meetings starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper.
If a workshop is held prior to the meeting, it will be advertised and it usually starts at 7.00pm.
The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Ben Goonan, Richard Goonan, Bill Holsworth, Rob Moors, Rod Orr, Bob Ruddick, Darren White.

Excursions are conducted irregularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. In addition to local excursions, campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one active group that meets regularly (the Fauna Study Group) and other groups that meet at irregular intervals.

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observers Group: This group has field excursions and the occasional lecture evening. Please consult the *Whirrakee* for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5449 3479.
To propose meetings or excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see bottom of page 2.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 26, No.11, December 2005
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

CONTENT

Item	Contributor	Page
Excursions 2006	Richard Goonan	3
60 years on, 40 years back; a few more recollections...	Peter Ellis	3
General Meeting, November: 'Owl Journeys of the World', Speaker: David Hollands	Sabine Wilkens	5
General meeting October: '*Xanthorrhoea* – Ecology and Flowering', Speaker: Marc Bellette	Sabine Wilkens	7
Another rainforest	Rod Orr	9
The Frog from Golden Square	Jenny Mann/Laurel Street P.S.	10

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's note
Can you remember Brenda Cheers' article in the September edition? There was a tricky question in there about the longest, the shortest and the most famous rivers in Australia. Did you know the answer? If not, look on page 3. As flagged in the last edition, there is a frog poem in here from Laurel Street Primary School. Maurie Lewis has been involved with the school and with this story (for all those not brought up with Banjo Patterson, it might help to know the original poem).
Lastly, please remember there is no Whirrakee and no general meeting in January. All the more reason to come to the Christmas dinner! As an extra enticement, we have had a last minute change of speaker. Neville Rosengren is now unable to tell us about his giant earthworm project, and instead, we are going to find out about Glenys' Flame Robins from Sedgwick. Neville has promised he will talk to the club in March next year. Thanks go to Glenys for being prepared to talk at such short notice.

Front Cover Photograph – Photographer: Mari Trini Lumeras Sanchez
This pretty rainforest gully in the Badja State Forest near the township of Numeralla (southern Highlands of NSW) looks like a picture book or one of those calendar pages.... however, the forest all around this gully has been logged. There are, in fact, many (often vulnerable) pockets of temperate rainforest all along a coastal belt between Victoria and Queensland. With all the rain we have had, they would probably look their best at the moment (see also page 9).

Excursions 2006 - Richard Goonan

Hello all members, I am pleased to offer an exciting calendar of excursions for your enjoyment during 2006. After discussing various options with some members, the following calendar has been suggested. I hope this reflects the varied interests of club members and there is something of interest for all.
Field trips are a great way to meet other members, share knowledge and develop interests. By using a bus for group transport, I hope to enhance the social atmosphere and make the most of the time available. Trips will usually be a full day, and the calendar includes both local areas and locations further away.

Please look out for a monthly reminder in *Whirrakee*, prior to the excursion. To allow the booking of a vehicle, please register interest in attending the trip prior to the monthly meeting at the latest. If you intend to drive your own vehicle, registering is not required, please feel free to just turn up. The bus will be for those who wish to use it and enjoy a relaxed day at minimal cost.

Excursions will leave from the club rooms in Golden Square at the prescribed time. Please don't be late because we will leave on time! A fee will apply to cover costs and this will usually be $10, although trips further away will cost $15. This is a minimal fee and if we utilise group transport, it will save costs. A light morning and afternoon tea will also be provided as part of the fee.
Please check if any gear is required apart from the usual hat, jacket, sturdy footwear and food (lunch) and drinking water. This information will be found in the *Whirrakee* prior to the excursion.

If you have any queries, or to register for excursions, please feel free to contact me on 0423418815 and leave a message, and I will endeavour to answer your questions. The initial calendar below will be followed by a more detailed lift-out in the next *Whirrakee*. I look forward to seeing you next year and hope we can fill the bus.

EXCURSION CALENDAR 2006

11 February - Mt Buffalo - Alpine Vegetation, Fire Recovery, Birds, Short Walks
11 March - Lerdederg Gorge - Central Highlands Forest
15 April - Local Birds, Sewerage Farm, Whipstick
13 May - Local Fauna, Hollows and Habitat (suggestions for location needed)
10 June - Local Landscapes - Geology and Ecology
15 July - Kooyoora/Inglewood - Plants and Birds
12 August - Daylesford - Fungi (interchangeable with July depending on rainfall/temp)
16 September - North Central Region Roadsides, Conservation Values
14 October - Barmah Forest
11 November - Campaspe River Journey
16 December - TBA (Suggestions ?)

Solution to Brenda Cheers question posed in the September edition, page 4:
The article described a place Brenda and a friend visited to release a joey. She mentioned having seen three rivers on this trip, two of which bordered the property they took the joey to. The three rivers were Australia's longest, the shortest and the most famous. Did you get this right?

The answer is the **Darling**, the **Rufus** and the **Murray**.

---

60 years on 40 years back....a few more recollections of the BFNC

by Peter Ellis

Editor's note. This piece is one that was mentioned by Peter Ellis in his recent article 'sixty years on, forty years back' (November Whirrakee). It deals with the club's conservation campaign during the early 1970s.

There were a number of catalysts in the late 1960s re the Whipstick, looming Collins St type land development, the threat of the Minister for Lands (Sir William McDonald) opening up the Little Desert for development and a 'leak' that the Whipstick was next on the list. This initiated Frank Robbins' wonderful Survey of the Whipstick, published in instalments in the Bendigo Naturalist from approximately 1966 to 1973. The Jaycees sponsored a Whipstick seminar in conjunction with the BFNC in 1970, their year of conservation. This was to lead to the creation of the Forest Park, although the ultimate aim had been for a National Park, but also it was mooted that all public land in terms of State Forests surrounding all of Bendigo should receive consideration for ultimate reservation as park. Frank's Whipstick Survey provided the documentation that the LCC and the Hamer/Borthwick Government required before any area would be considered for National Park or any other type of conservation reserve, and that I feel was the key in the success of the BFNC in saving the Whipstick, ultimately as National Park more recently, but also with the introduction of the Interim Development Order of late 1974 which warded off the land speculators and allowed a program of funding for returning key areas of private land to the proposed park.

Salomen's Gully was a different issue between the right hand and the left hand of the Bendigo City Council. The Parks section through John Beaumont endorsed the reservation as a Flora Reserve proposed by the BFNC about the end of 1971 or early 1972. Within days of an announcement of the Council's decision in the Bendigo Advertiser with an editorial praising the BFNC in its vision for a park, clearing for a fairway smack down the centre of the proposed park, then Cemetery Reserve, had occurred under the 'supposed' auspices of the Council's Engineering Department on behalf of the Quarry Hill Golf Club. This battle for ground lasted several years, a new City Council Engineer, Colin Ackehurst, who had joined the BFNC did his utmost to resolve the issue and a compromise boundary between Flora Reserve and extension of the Golf Course, known as the 'Ackehurst Line', was drawn up and agreed to. Colin Ackehurst then transferred to another municipality and the whole issue reared its head again. The BFNC sought the assistance of the Conservation Council of Victoria, who sent up one of their representatives from the Macedon Ranges, who had been very successful in the conservation of that area. He walked over the area, and said, 'Apply for the Whole Lot', Golf Course included. This we did and within days, Lands Department Officials, in flash limousines, arrived at my doorstep in Reginald St, and I imagine the same had happened with the Secretary of the Golf Club. There was no chance of a ring around or meeting, it was a case of 'you will accept this won't you?'. And so the Ackehurst Line boundary (which BFNC had basically proposed in the first place) was endorsed and the Salomen's Gully Flora Reserve created.

Jackass Flat, I have written about only recently but this issue was a different approach. The residents of Jacob St and the BFNC had combined to save the area from the Bendigo Trust's Dai Gum San (Chinese Village) proposal. The Field Nats had been quietly working on a Flora Reserve proposal prior to the residents finding out about Trust's proposals, but Shirley Mainstone in 1974 on behalf of the residents really launched a magnificent campaign for the creation of the Flora Reserve. We (BFNC) had a very terse meeting with the Trust who against all attempts at advice, had chosen Jackass Flat out of several possibilities, the others Devonshire Gully between Eaglehawk and California Gully, White Hills and the original Bridge St China Town. The chairman of the Bendigo Trust basically told us where to go. The Trust and the Council making presumptions on their

proposed use of public land had already placed local Government authorities off side. However the key issue was that an Environmental Impact Study Report had just been legislated as a requirement before land development could be endorsed, and we knew from 'inside', there was not a chance of Dai Gum San going ahead on such a magnificent area of natural bushland with high flora and fauna values. The Chinese Dragon Museum at Bridge St and the Flora Reserve at Jackass Flat was the best result for both in the end. It is deplorable that today, the reserve has found desecration from the conservation body of management.

The club of course had other conservation campaigns at the time, Jack Kellam had spear headed attempts to save the Wychitella Forest ahead of the time the local Wychitella Forest Preservation League had formed to take up the cudgell, and there were State and National issues such as Lake Pedder, the Glenelg River and Little Desert, just a few that come to mind.

November General Meeting –
Speaker: David Hollands
'Owl Journeys around the World'

by Sabine Wilkens

The title of this talk does not refer to any journeys made by owls but to those made by David Hollands, a wildlife photographer, in his quest to photograph owls. So far there have been thirteen of these journeys, and in his talk David gave us a glimpse of some of them.

It all started in an old barn in **England** in the 1960s, when photographers still had flash bulbs that needed changing while still hot. David showed us one of his earliest owl photos from that time. These old plate photos really have something special about them.

After this short introduction, we went to **Finland** to look at Forest Owls (genus *Stryx*). While one would think that big hollows needed by these owls would be plentiful in Finland, they are actually becoming rare. A friend of David has started a gigantic nest box scheme, which involved placing 20 000 nest boxes in the forests where these owls occur. In a good year, one third of these are now occupied by owls and they get measured and banded every year...what a huge job! The owls can get very aggressive when disturbed and special protective gear needs to be worn when dealing with them. While females can be caught for measuring at the nest, a decoy (a stuffed male of the same species making taped sounds) is needed to attract males. The young of this particular species get out of their nest two weeks before they can fly. They get down their tree, walk across the forest floor and sit on another tree begging for food. This is quite a vulnerable stage in their life and it is interesting to speculate on the advantages of this behaviour.

Another owl in Finland was the European Pygmy Owl, very cute and very small but a ferocious predator who eats voles, mice and birds. There was also the Great Grey Owl, a huge animal with an amazing facial disc. It has large ear openings, positioned slightly asymmetrically, which improves their hearing and their ability to locate their prey. These owls can hear their prey through a thick layer of snow and pounce on it successfully, even though they never see it.

From Finland we were taken to **Austria** where the European Eagle Owl lives. This is the biggest owl in Europe and the second biggest in the world. It can weigh over 4 kg (for comparison, Powerful Owls weigh around 2 kg). They feed on hedgehogs – one of the few animals that do.

The Eagle owls live on cliffs and other inaccessible sites, but sadly, this does not stop them being hunted, either for sport or because they are perceived to be a threat to other wildlife. One of David's friends and fellow owl enthusiast has taken this case all the way to the High Court in Austria and had some success in that they are now protected during the breeding season.

On to **South Africa,** to see more eagle owls. The Spotted Eagle Owl is smaller than the European one and very hard to find. The Giant Eagle Owl is white faced and has extraordinary ear tufts. Quite a few owls have these tufts, they look like ears but are not.

From **Argentina**, David showed us pictures of the Burrowing Owl, a ground dwelling owl that runs a lot. They nest in pre-existing hollows and depressions in the open ground.

In **Costa Rica**, the government has set aside large tracts of land for National Parks. One of the interesting inhabitants there, for David, was the Spectacled Owl, a fantastic looking bird which eats squirrel monkeys! Barn Owls are also found there. They are the most widespread owl in the world. Other owls in South/Central America are the Pacific Screech Owls (genus *Otis*) which is perfectly camouflaged and the Little Pygmy Owl.

Onto colder regions now…In **Oregon** there were more Spotted Owls (*Stryx*). They are loathed by the timber industry and have been severely decimated in recent years. Concerned American activists however, found a passage in the American Constitution which states that 'no government can knowingly allow a species to become extinct'. As a result, logging has now stopped in many areas of forest there.

From Oregon, David went to **Alaska** to photograph Forest Owls, Boreal Owls, Soaring Owls, the Great Horned Owl and Snowy Owls. The latter are tundra dwellers and the northernmost owls of the world. They live on lemmings, and, as lemmings have boom or bust years, it is very hard to predict when Snowy Owls are going to be around. David had to make two trips to Alaska to see them in any reasonable numbers. The northernmost town of Burrow only has 84 days of sun. In the summer, the sun never sets, and in winter it never comes up. What a place! Although Burrow's emblem is a Snowy Owl in flight, Eskimos are still allowed to hunt these owls for food and feathers. How long this situation can be sustained is uncertain.

In **Japan**, David tried to find the Fish Owl. There are only few left, and one person has taken it upon himself to provide some intensive conservation, which has brought their numbers up to over 100 in the last few years. Interestingly, fish owls are noisy. As fish cannot hear them as they are being stalked, so they do not have to be as quiet as other owls.

Christmas Island is the top of an extinct volcano. Many of its plants and animals are endemic as they have evolved there. The most famous resident animal, the Christmas Island Crab, is presently being threatened by an introduced African ant. David went there to photograph the Christmas Island Hawk Owl. He showed us some wonderful shots and told us, that when he turned around, his camera bag had been invaded by the biggest crab of all – the Coconut or Robber Crab.

Near the end of his talk, David briefly mentioned a visit to **Queensland**, where he tried to find the Rufous Owl and the Lesser Sooty Owl, and was having to perch himself on some adventurous and flimsy looking construction up high in a tree to do so.

We ended in **Bendigo** with a sobering message about the Powerful Owls in the

district. They are in big trouble as the areas of forest left for the birds do not seem big enough any more to sustain their needs. Once an owl leaves a particular territory, it is seldom recolonised and once a mate is lost, it seems too difficult to recruit a new one. This is not good news for Bendigo, but it seems to be a reflection of the plight of owls all over the world. Hunting birds need large territories with an intact ecology, so that their prey is also available.

Despite the unfortunate ending, the talk was incredibly inspiring and visually appealing. When I arrived that night, I wondered why the room was so unusually crowded – but by the end of the talk, I knew why. Even my daughter, who normally starts pulling on my sleeve half way through any talk, sat and listened attentively the whole time (her interest in owls had been sparked by a great book series called 'The Guardians of Ga'Hoole' by Kathryn Lasky. I highly recommend these books for the 10-12 age group).

October General Meeting –
Speaker; Marc Bellette,
'*Xanthorrhoea*, Ecology and Flowering'

Anyone who can spell the family name for these grass trees without checking deserves a medal. Ok., don't look, just give it a go…

Did you get Xanthorrhoeaceae?

This is (or was) the family of grass trees but the family has changed regularly, even over the last few years while Marc has been conducting his PhD studies. The relationship of its members to other plant groups is far from clear. Recent studies (hot off the press that night) have revealed *Agave* to be a close relative! These studies are not only based on comparisons of DNA but also on floral and pollen characteristics, types of anthraquinones (resins) and the presence of a secondary thickening meristem.

Other grass trees from Western Australia (e.g. *Kingia*) resemble *Xanthorrhoea* in morphology but do not seem to be closely related. The question is now being asked whether this is an ancient group of plants or a component of the modern Australian flora that seems to be evolving rapidly?

Xanthorrhoea are stemmed, arborescent plants. They are branched aerially or underground. Their long linear leaves are usually quadratic in cross section and the dead leaf bases that persist and cluster around the stem are filled with a resinous material. The inflorescence is a massive spike on a wooden scape. The seeds are matt black and resinous. Plants have a secondary thickening meristem that allows their stems to grow in width even though they are monocots, which generally do not possess woody growth.

How many species of *Xanthorrhoea* are there? Estimates range from one to 29 species (39 taxa in all, if the varieties are counted).
Features used to identify the different species are

- presence/absence of a trunk
- the spear (scape to spike ratio)
- the leaves
- packing bract morphology
- the floral parts (shape of bracts)

Even though grass trees look like they are adapted to a dry environment, only two species grow in semi-arid country. Many species occur in small, restricted areas and they are often associated with a particular local geology. They may occur, for example, in areas where the soil has high magnesium and silica content.
Often, closely related species as judged by their morphology, occur on opposite ends of the continent.

The current thinking is that the group is about 90 million years old and has a palaeo-equatorial origin. The members began looking like grass trees abut 50-60 million years ago. They were adapted to cretaceous rainforest-like conditions, a warm climate with alternating wet and dry seasons.

Xanthorrhoaea australis, the Austral Grass tree, is the species closest to Bendigo. It is found in the Rushworth Forest, in the Grampians and other parts of Western Victoria, as well as near Melbourne and South Australia. With a few exceptions it does not grow inland of the Great Divide but the name is very confusing. It has been used as a name for a lot of other grass trees over the time.
Marc has used grass trees from the Rushworth population as his study plants. Other populations he has looked at include those in the Grampians.

One of the other species Marc is studying, and which mostly occurs north of the Divide is *X. glauca*. This species has some spectacular stands in the Rushworth region. Marc reported that the species only grows about 13 mm in height a year, and thus some estimates of these specimens put them as being about 400 years old. It used to be thought that their presence is a sign of gold deposits, but it could just be poor soils this species is indicating.

For some reason, grass trees have always been reported as the quintessential recoverers after fire. This claim was investigated after the Canberra fires in recent years. There it was found that about 30% fire related mortality had occurred. At Redcastle, a 26% mortality was found, four years after a fire.

The plants in the Rushworth Forest seem long unburnt. It is expected though that even a low intensity fire will cause severe mortality in this population. The question now is whether fire is in any way important to this species. The Rushworth grass trees are growing in extremely poor, skeletal and acidic soils. Can they recruit under these conditions?
Do they need fire for regeneration at least?

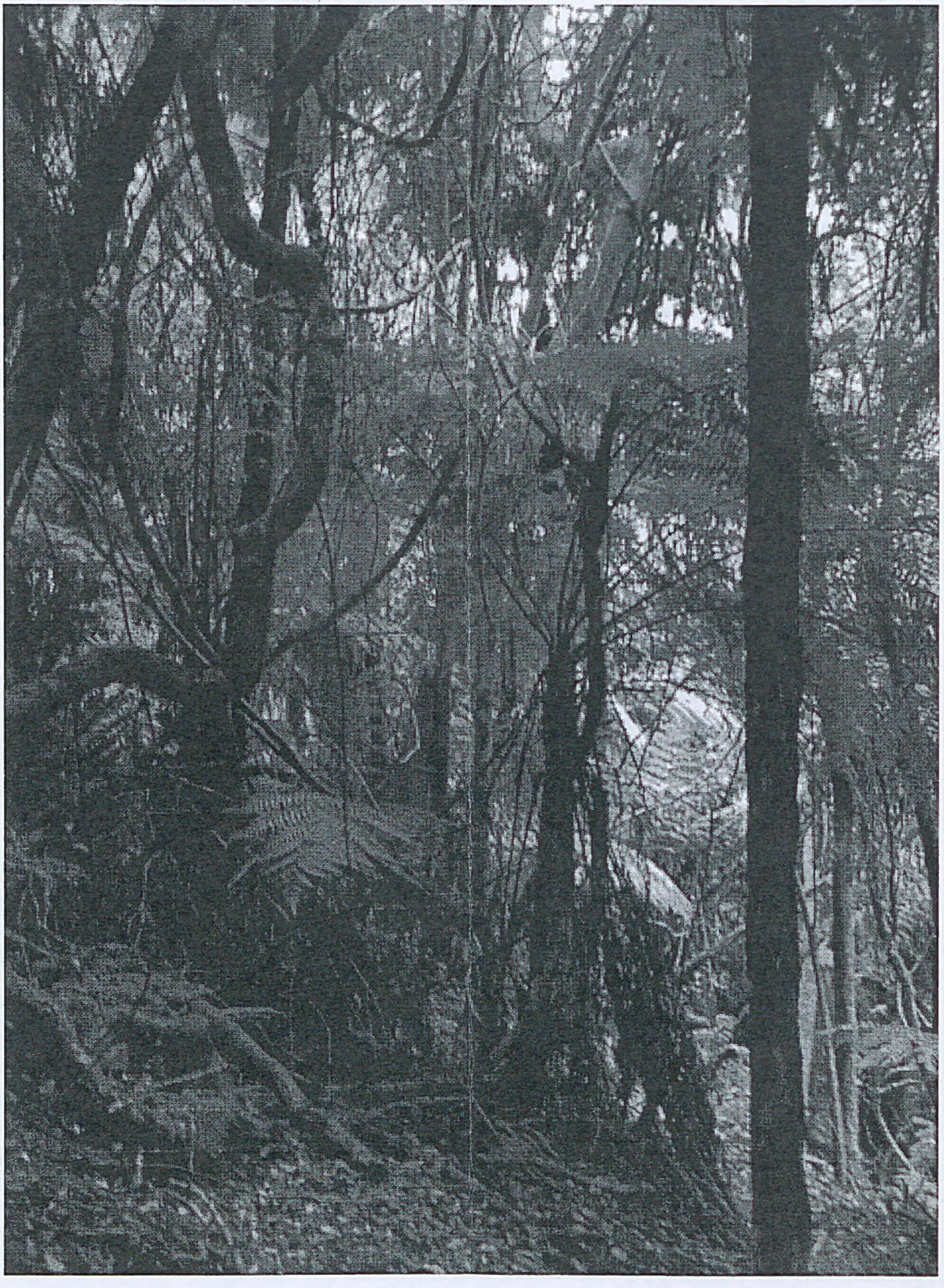
Marc has been trying to answer this question but so far without success.
He has managed to grow seedlings in ash bed and burnt as well as unburnt substrates and there is some weak indication that root development is better in the ashed or burnt substrate compared to the unburnt one. However, all his 'in situ' and transplant trials have failed. He believes that these seedlings might need a (series of) very wet years for successful establishment, perhaps a one in a thousand year event?

Studying the relationship between fire and flowering has also opened more question than it has answered. Fire contains ethylene, a gas that also serves as a plant hormone. Ethylene causes many different plant responses but it is generally regarded as a stress and a senescence regulator.
In *Xanthorrhoe*a, ethylene triggers a flowering response and it is well known that some grass trees flower 'en masse' after a fire. What is adaptive about this mass flowering response?

By all flowering together, a population might avoid being preyed upon too much. May be there was a megafaunal grazing pressure or such behaviour avoids a build-up of predatory insects?
On the other hand, the plant's development may be flexible enough to make maximum use of certain resources when they are available, in this case straight after a fire.

There are many unanswered questions to do with flowering, mortality, recruitment, response to nutrients and water as well as resilience to burning.
Marc's most interesting talk has brought some of these to the surface. These plants are fascinating and difficult to study and I guess they will not reveal their secrets to us in a hurry.

Rod Orr went to a SEANA meeting recently and was taken on a tour. This photo shows a good approximation of a temperate rain-forest mentioned in conjunction with the front cover photo. It was taken in the Nadji forest, just over the NSW border.



The Frog from Golden Square

By Jenny Mann and the students from Laurel Street Primary School

(loosely based on verses 1,2,3,4,6,11,12 and 13 of 'The Man from Snowy River' with apologies to 'Banjo Patterson'

There was movement at the primary, for the word had passed around
That the frog from 3/4H had got away,
He had joined the wild bush Banjos – he was worth a rich reward,
So all the kids had gathered to the fray.
All the tried and noted students from the classrooms near and far
Had mustered at 2/3 room with torchlight,
For the children loved dear Ralphie, wherever he had gone,
determined they would not give up all night.

There was Kory, who gave young Ralph some water in a cup,
His uniform all dust and dirty though;
But few could search beside him when his blood was fairly up –
He would go wherever frog and man could go.
Then Maurie of the Waterhole came down to lend a hand,
No better bushman ever knew his frogs;
For ne'er a frog call would stump him – he knew them all by name –
He learnt while paddling deep in ponds and bogs.

A frog there'd been in Merrill's grade – a small and weedy beast;
He was something like a cane toad undersized,
With a touch of Banjo froggy – three parts thoroughbred at least –
And such as are 3/4's children prized.
He was hard and tough and wiry – just the sort that won't say die –
There was courage in his quick impatient hop:
And he bore the badge of gameness in his bright and fiery eye,
And the proud and lofty carriage of his top.

But still so slight and weedy, one would doubt his power to stay,
Mrs Harvey said "That frog will never do
For a long and drying hop – Ralph, you'd better come our way,
Under the classroom floor is too rough for such as you."
So they waited sad and wistful – only Merrill stood his friend –
"I think we ought to let him come," she said;
"I warrant he'll be with us when he's wanted at the end,
For both Ralph and other froggies were pond-bred."

So they listened, and they heard a croak from under the floor-stumps,
They raced in to get the froggy-calling tape,
And the teacher gave the orders –"Boys, go at him when he jumps,
No use to try for fancy croaking now.
And Kory, you must wheel him, try and make him hop just right.
Look boldly, lad and, never fear the loss."
For never was a searcher that could keep the frog in sight...
Then arrived the puzzled Deputy Boss!

She recorded every effort as she photographed their bums,
As underneath Grade 2/3 room they crawled,
Saw Merrill ply the flashlight fiercely; they were searching on their tums,
Until at last the fruitless quest she stalled.
They had tried – many-handed, till covered in dirt and grass;
They'd followed like a bloodhound on Ralph's track,
Till they halted, cowed and beaten; then turned their heads for class
Merrill, alone and without Ralphie, brought them back.

...And down by Golden Square, where the Aussie flag we raise
Round the corner from the street named High
We hear the train's haunting whistle, and the white stars fairly blaze
At midnight in the cold and frosty sky,
And where around the Bendigo Creek the reed-beds sweep and sway
To the breezes, and the flowing waters wide,
The frog from 3/4 H is a household word today,
And the children tell the tale of how Ralph died.

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meetings

Wednesday, December 14 6.30pm
Christmas Dinner (note earlier starting time)
The speaker is Glenys Moors and she will be talking about her Sedgwick Flame Robin project. All welcome.

Christmas Lunch at Jack Ipsen's Sunday December 18

This annual event is a long tradition. Jack is again expecting our members and their families for the annual Christmas picnic at his property at Lyel Glen near Redesdale.
Please bring all your food and drink as well as a chair (if you need one). There are plenty interesting things to see before you sit down for lunch.
Please contact a committee member if you need instructions how to get there.

Wednesday, February 8 7.30pm
Members usually bring their holiday slides along for the first meeting of the year. You are welcome to bring yours along.
(Note, there is no January meeting)

Excursions

We have a brand new excursion program for 2006 (starting with a day trip to Mt Buffalo). Please see page 3 for details.

Fauna Group

This group meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm.

Wednesday, February 22 7.30pm
Topic: Possums

Fauna Group Excursions

Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30, the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179 or 5442 1813. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone but go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

BFNC Garden Working Bee

Regular garden working bees are held on the Saturday before each general meeting.

The last working bee for 2006 will be on **Saturday, 10th December, 9am.**

All welcome

New Edition of Box Ironbark CD

Just to let you know that the new edition of 'Plants and Animals of the Box-Ironbark Area of Central Victoria' is available at the usual price of $ 50.-

...and **Wildlife of the Box Ironbark Country by Chris Tzaros** is also still available at $ 30.-.

Both of these items would make great Christmas presents! Please contact Bill Holsworth if you are interested in purchasing one of these.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.